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NOVEMBER 2005
VOL. 5 NO. 4

A Message from the Honourable Linda Reid

Minister of State for Child Care and MLA, Richmond East

As the mother of two young children, the issue of early learning and child care is on my mind every day, both personally and professionally. The recent signing of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement with the federal government means an additional $633 million for early learning and child care in BC over the next five years. I am delighted with the exciting opportunities this funding will provide to improve early learning and child care for all of British Columbia's youngest citizens.

Minister Reid with a small friend at the Esquimalt Military Family Resource Centre.

This government is committed to putting children and families first. Our goal is to give children the strongest possible start by increasing supports available for child care, early childhood development programs and early learning programs. Working with the other child-serving ministries, we are developing a holistic approach for early learning and child care that will give BC kids the best possible start in life.

With a province as diverse as ours, the needs of parents vary greatly. Whether it's about shift work, individuals who only work weekends, or a multitude of other challenges, we need to ensure that we develop a system that makes sense, and addresses how families actually structure their lives. I have no doubt that the extraordinary compassion, knowledge, and commitment of ministry staff and child care providers will enable us to meet the challenges ahead.

In order to move forward, we need to embrace innovation. That's why we are asking you to share your expertise and ideas with us. This month, we are conducting a public consultation on early learning and child care in BC. Parents, providers, organizations and other interested parties are invited to participate by completing our web-based feedback form. A number of community meetings which are open to the public are also planned. Meeting locations and more details on the consultation process are available at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/consult.

The results of the consultation will be used to develop early learning and child care policies, as well as help determine how government resources are allocated across ministries to maximize outcomes for young children.

Our commitment is to provide quality early learning and child care in a way that honours the cares and concerns of parents. .../continued page 3

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Children and Family Development
www.mcf.gov.bc.ca

Children in Care Become Kids in Air

It was a lofty act of generosity that a group of children in care will always remember.

Denis Murphy, a pilot with North Cariboo Air in Fort St. John, arranged for 21 children in care to take to the skies. The free flights took place on July 8th.

Murphy, 27, was inspired to offer the flights after moving to Fort St. John from Calgary, leaving behind his friends and family.

Marcia Wilson, Team Leader, was the first to speak with Murphy about his offer. "I thought it was wonderful," she says. "Many of these kids would not get this opportunity otherwise. He wanted them to know that there was something big, something positive, they could do with their lives."

The children ranged in age from 3 to 16. Each child got two rides in one of two planes and a helicopter. Two pilots in addition to Murphy donated their time, and North Cariboo Air's administrative staff assisted with the activities. The company, pilots, and staff covered all the costs.

"We are so grateful to Denis and everyone at North Cariboo Air for giving these kids a day they'll never forget," says Wilson.

Denis Murphy of North Cariboo Air gave 21 kids in care the thrill of a lifetime.

Kelly McEllistrum is a Child Protection Worker who accompanied a teen and a five-year-old girl on one of the flights. The child had never been in a plane before.

"At first she said it was a little scary," McEllistrum says. "But once we got in the air and she was looking down, she said it was really, really fun and she wanted to do it again."

Following the flights, the kids were served hamburgers and hot dogs, and each child received a 'Certificate of Achievement' declaring that they had earned their honorary wings. The event was such a success that North Cariboo Air is considering offering the flights again, perhaps on an annual basis.

For Murphy, the delighted response of the kids had special significance. He was reminded of his own difficult childhood.

"I was really messed up and I had an attitude problem," Murphy says. "But, luckily, my stepmother is a social service worker and she basically straightened me out. I wanted to do something because my mother's an inspiration to me."

Kudos To...

Extra-big kudos to **Alex Wright**, MCFD's Manager of Information Operations, for his leadership of the ministry's computer Refresh Project. The project began in June, and involves replacing 4,500 desktop computers in the ministry. Most of the computers to be replaced are 5 to 6 years old! The project will be concluded by the end of November.

On October 2nd, the 14th annual CIBC Run for the Cure took place at the University of Victoria. MCFD entered the event with a 22-person team called Children at Heart. Although it was cold and windy, the team ran 5km for a great cause and raised approximately $3,500 for the cure! More info at **www.cbcf.org**.

Tamara Leonard-Vail, from MCFD Adoption Services, was recently invited by the federal government to represent the commonwealth provinces and territories at The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

Tamara met with delegates from around the world at the Special Commission in The Hague, The Netherlands in September. Tamara's attendance at the conference was a huge honour for the adoption team and ministry. We're proud of you!

In December, the **Victoria Association for Community Living** will celebrate 50 years of community service. Congratulations VACL!

SIGN ME UP

Please add me to your electronic distribution list.

A Time to Honour Foster Parents

MCFD staff David Evans & Dean Cornelson recognize Frances O'Rourke for her outstanding work as a foster parent in Maple Ridge.

October was Foster Family Month, a chance to highlight the amazing and vital contribution made by BC's foster parents. There are approximately 3,500 foster homes with more than 6,000 generous and caring individuals who share in supporting children in care in BC.

"Foster parents are the unseen heroes of communities all over BC," says Jeremy Berland, MCFD's ADM of Regional Operations and Director of Child Welfare. "Every day, thousands of them are making a difference in the lives of children and youth."

One of those thousands is Maria Pimentel of Burnaby, who has been a foster parent for 14 years. She's quick to say exactly what has motivated her to care for 30 kids over that time.

"I love the kids, and I adore helping people," she says. "The most important thing is the love of the kids."

In celebration of Foster Family Month, events were held throughout the province in October.

Berland feels it takes a special person to be a foster parent. "Dedication is really needed," he says. "You need to be able to share your life as well as the physical aspects of your home.

And foster parents have to be able to give a lot more in terms of love and caring than they may get back, because a lot of these children and youth have been hurt by their experiences."

Sheila Durnford, president of the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations, says foster parents deserve credit all year round. She has been a foster parent for 20 years, and says the most important qualities are patience, structure, caring, and a lot of humour.

"It can be hard work, but it's very, very rewarding."

The Ministry of Children and Family Development joins with communities across BC in thanking all foster parents for being there for a child who needs you.

For more info about fostering: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/index.html

A Message from Minister Reid cont'd...

There's no single approach that will meet the needs of every family – that's why we must be able to provide a range of opportunities and services.

I am proud of the countless examples of excellence in child care in this province, and of the many extraordinary day care providers and early childhood educators we are fortunate to work with. Your partnership is essential to our success. Working together, we will continue to build on our solid foundation in early learning and child care in this province, ensuring a quality, flexible, system that meets the needs of all our children and families.

I look forward to ongoing dialogue. Please stay in touch.

Mailing Addresses:

Office of the Minister of State for Child Care
PO Box 9062 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Child Care Policy Branch
Ministry of Children and Family Development
PO Box 9778 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9S5

Information on recent changes to BC's Child Care programs and services can be found in the article on page 5.

You can also visit our web site at:
www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare

The Faces of Foster Care

Throughout November, six children in care will have their unique artwork featured in banners on Vancouver's Burrard Street bridge.

The banners are the result of a drawing contest held last Spring as part of MCFD's foster parent appreciation program. Forty children and youth in care from across Vancouver, Richmond and the North Shore participated in the contest, which featured the theme "the faces of foster care".

Six works of art were chosen for the banner, which will be displayed on the bridge all month thanks to the support and co-operation of the City of Vancouver.

Sharon Armstrong, Foster Parent Recruitment Team Leader in MCFD's Vancouver office, coordinates the team that developed the idea. "We hold our foster parents in very high regard," she says, "They are an integral part of our collective responsibility to provide safe and nurturing homes for our children. There never seems to be a big enough way to thank them for their tremendous commitment to children - so we are constantly in search of significant ways to honour them."

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

Are you a staff member or service provider involved in delivering an innovative program or service? Do you know someone who deserves to be recognized?

Click on the link below to send us your idea in 100 words or less and your suggestion may be featured in a future article.

MCF.NewsletterFeedback@gov.bc.ca

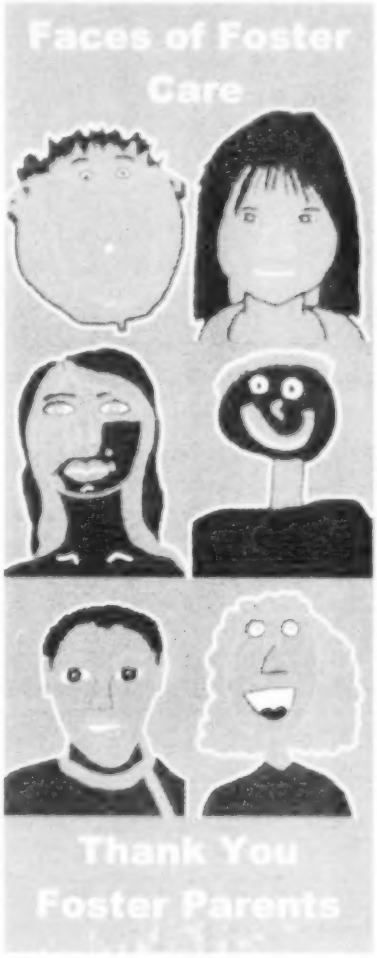
About a year ago, the team began to think how fabulous it would be to have a banner flying on one of the local bridges commemorating foster parents. While the development of the idea was a team effort, Armstrong says credit for putting it into action goes to Mickey Miller, MCFD Recruitment Social Worker, who worked above and beyond to have the art made ready for the production and hanging of the banners. The artwork is also being used for recruitment promotional items such as posters, cards and letterhead.

In late September, the Vancouver Coastal MCFD Foster Parent Recruitment Team organized a party to celebrate everyone who entered the contest. Not all the children were able to attend, but the 23 kids and their foster parents who did were treated to a very special evening thanks to the generosity of members of the local business community.

Space for the event was donated by Greg Langley, Catering Manager of the Sands Best Western Hotel in Vancouver, and guests and staff enjoyed delicious pizza donated by Nat Bostone of Nat's New York Pizzeria.

Upon arrival, each participant received a personalized name tag featuring their art work, as well as a framed print of their drawing. Gift certificates for Famous Players Theatres and Toys "R" Us for each child were donated by Yvonne McSkimming's charitable organization of singer/songwriters, Just Singin' Round. Many thanks go to everyone who donated their services and time to make the night a special one.

Although there were 40 submissions, only 6 images could be chosen for the banner. Dennis Padmore, Resources Manager for MCFD's Vancouver Coastal Region, said "the contest wasn't about who created the best drawing. Each submission was excellent, but we were limited by the tight graphic design requirements. We would have loved to use all of them". Although not every picture could be chosen, the evening's events ensured each young person felt like a winner.



This banner will be displayed on the Burrard Street bridge in Vancouver throughout November. The images were created by six children in care from the Lower Mainland.

Child Care Program Expansion

Recent changes in BC's Child Care programs and services reflect the province's commitment to developing a quality early learning and child care system that is stable, flexible, and accessible.

In September, the ministry announced an expansion of the Child Care Subsidy program, as well as increases to the Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) and Capital Funding programs. All changes became effective October 1, 2005.

The changes benefit an estimated 16,000 BC children. About 10,000 children are newly eligible, and an additional 6,000 kids already in the program have seen their subsidy increase.

As a result of the subsidy expansion, more families are now eligible for subsidy and subsidy rates are higher for children under six in regulated care. The income threshold for full subsidy has increased from $21,000 to $38,000 for children under six years of age in registered or licensed child care facilities. Families with incomes over this amount may be eligible for a partial subsidy.

The changes benefit an estimated 16,000 BC children. About 10,000 children are newly eligible, and an additional 6,000 kids already in the program have seen their subsidy increase.

Families with children who are not in licensed group care may receive an additional subsidy for their children to attend a licensed preschool, without reducing the family's child care subsidy amount.

In addition, the CCOF funding rates have been increased from 15% to 20% of the median cost of providing child care services. This amounts to a funding increase of 36.6 % for each child care provider who cares for children under age six. Further increases to CCOF in years two through five of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement will be linked to quality improvement initiatives.

Funding for applicants under the Major and Minor Capital Funding programs has also been increased.

Learn more about Child Care programs and services in BC at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/.

Become a Registered Child Care Provider

Thousands of BC children are cared for in loving homes by Licence-Not-Required providers. These providers are essential to the success of our child care system.

Families, with children under six, who are supported by Licence-Not-Required providers will continue to receive their present subsidy. However, if a provider becomes licensed or registered with their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) Program, these families would become eligible to receive an increased child care subsidy.

Licence-Not-Required child care providers generally find that registration with their local Child Care Resource Program is an easy process, and many find they already meet most of the requirements.

Information on what's involved in the registration process is available by contacting your local CCRR office. A list of CCRR offices is available on our website. Start-up funding may be available through the CCRR program for any provider requiring financial assistance to become licensed or registered.

RELATED LINKS

In this issue, we are focussing on Canadian organizations undertaking research and policy development in the area of child care.

Canadian Child Care Federation - view the federal/provincial bilateral agreements on early learning and child care. www.cccf-fcsge.ca/home_en.html

Canadian Council on Social Development - fast facts on child care in Canada. www.ccsd.ca/perception/2712/fastfacts.htm

Child & Family Canada articles:
• a glimpse of child care in Italy. www.cfc-efc.ca/ docs/cccf/00000048.htm
• how accreditation is a tool for enhancing quality care. www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cccf/ 00000059.htm

Child Care Information Exchange - survey on child care wages in North America. www.ccie.com/survey/poll_results.php?survey_id=77

Child Care Resource and Research Unit - research and policy resources for early childhood education and care in Canada. www.childcarecanada.org/

Western Canada Family Child Care Association of B.C. - the professional association of family child care providers in B.C. www.wcfcca.ca

Westcoast Child Resource Centre - offers information, referrals, training and resources for parents and others who provide services to children and families. www.wstcoast.org

Ministry Services Achieve Accreditation

Over the past two years, many agencies that contract with MCFD have completed the accreditation process. Now, two of the ministry's direct services are making accreditation history. Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services (YFPS) and Provincial Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (PSDHH) are the first two Canadian services directly operated by government to achieve certification.

PSDHH received a letter in late October from the Council on Accreditation (COA), the third-party accrediting body responsible for their evaluation, confirming they achieved accreditation. YFPS has also received confirmation that they achieved accreditation, but are still awaiting official certification.

> "What impressed me most ... was the process of staff engagement and ownership at all levels of the organization, and the consequent pride of accomplishment that all staff shared."

Both YFPS and PSDHH passed their initial site reviews with flying colours. On average, agencies are required to make eight changes after their first site review. However, PSDHH had only two changes and YFPS had none – an incredible achievement for any organization. Monte Hardy, A/Director of PSDHH, said the staff "did the organization proud" during the entire process. Andre Picard, Director of YFPS, also credited their success to the work of staff leading up to, and including, the two-year long endeavour.

Alan Markwart, ADM of Provincial Services, said "what impressed me most was not the outcome of formal accreditation itself. It was the process of staff engagement and ownership throughout all levels of the organization, and the consequent pride of accomplishment that all staff shared."

Both organizations worked tirelessly to complete the accreditation process. PSDHH created an extremely comprehensive manual to monitor their work and improve services and relationships with clients, ensuring continuous quality improvement and improved risk management. YFPS created similar tools to guarantee that the best clinical practices go hand-in-hand with the best administrative practices, leading to continuous improvement in the field.

"Whether part of the ministry, or a private agency, accreditation is a vital tool in ensuring the highest quality of service for the public." says Sara Bristow, MCFD's Manager of Accreditation. "Organizations can be very proud of achieving accreditation."

Click here for more information on PSDHH.

To learn more about YFPS, click here.

Information on the accreditation process is available at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/accreditation/index.htm, or contact: sara.bristow@gov.bc.ca.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November: Adoption Awareness Month www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/index.htm

November 11 - 12: BC Association of Social Workers Fall Conference 2005 "Engaging Practice, Embracing Change",Vancouver www.bcasw.org

November 11 - 13: BC Aboriginal Child Care Society 8th Annual Provincial Aboriginal Child Care Conference, Vancouver www.acc-society.bc.ca/

November 13 - 20: Restorative Justice Week: Community, Victims and Prisoners www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/forum_e.shtml

November 17- 20: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Human Family Conference, Vancouver www.4worlds.org/heal.htm

November 19: Healthy Opportunities for Preschoolers Sechelt www.sunshinecoast families.ca/events.html

The Art of Advocacy - A Parent's Guide to Developing Pro-Active Skills November 19, 2005-Kelowna, www.idpofbc.ca/calendar/view_entry.php?id=70&date=20051119

January 14, 2006-Courtenay www.idpofbc.ca/calendar/view_entry.php?id=75&date=20060114

November 20: National Child Day www.childday.gc.ca

November 20 - 26: National Addictions Awareness Week www.naaw.net

December 3: International Day of Disabled Persons www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/iddp2005.htm

January 30, 2006: Victoria Community Consultation for Professionals with Disabilities www.canadianprofessionals.org